

consulted in public need.

The Romans felt that their relation to the gods was one of contract. If the proper ritual were followed and no mistakes were made, then the gods ought to act favorably; and if the man was satisfied, he ought to reward the god with a gift. But the Romans were tight-fisted - they bought the favor of the gods as cheaply as possible. However, since they were most anxious not to anger any of the gods, they soon set up a body of priests called pontiffs to see to it that the state performed all its proper obligations to the gods.

The Romans, believing that the gods warned men by natural signs, had a group of experts, called augurs, to interpret these signs. The will of the gods was determined chiefly by examining the livers of sacrificial animals and watching the flight of birds. Before any public officer performed an official act, the augurs observed the omen - if the birds flew in one direction, all was well; if not, the proposed act must be postponed. Nothing official was ever done without some of this solemn "hocus focus." For the Romans were very superstitious.

and were bound by many taboos. For example, the priest of Jupiter dared not "have his head indented; approach a cypress or eat swine meat or beans," nor was he allowed to "have his nails trimmed without burying the parings under a lucky tree.

The old Roman belief in spirits lasted in the family worship much longer than in the public cults. The spirit of the doorway, the spirit of the hearth fire etc. long continued to be worshipped before the shrine which was originally in the atrium, prayers were said and offerings were made. The father was assisted in the ritual by his wife & children; it usually took place at dinner before the dessert.

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of agriculture as well as of war in early times. Juno was revered by women; Minerva was patroness of craftsmen and Vesta watched over the hearth. Mercury and Hercules were patrons of trade. Apollo was at first the god of healing, later, after the Romans had closer contact with Greek civilization, their gods became more like Greek divinities. At an early time the Romans had their SIBYLLINE BOOKS, a collection of oracles, which they put under official control to be

at home which was a tunic, a plain woolen shirt with very short sleeves; this was long enough to reach from neck to below the knees. Over the tunic on formal occasions the early Roman wore the toga, a heavy woolen robe wrapped around the body, but at home and at work he did not wear it.

Roman religion had little influence on character and ideals of personal conduct, for these were largely the result of home training. In early times the Romans had believed in many spirits supposed to roam about in the fields and mountains, as we have seen, the Etruscans had brought in the idea of personification of these spirits and had given them human form on the model of the Greek divinities. But the Greek stories of the scandalous conduct of the gods shocked the pious Roman; for them there was little connection between such divinities and their own life. The Romans did recognize the supposed power of the gods and did their best to avoid their wrath. Whenever anyone told them about another god who had power, they added him to their already ample supply of

devine; but this meant only that there was another god to be propitiated.

The Latin names of the chief gods are better known to us than the Greek names. In early times the Roman gods had somewhat different functions from those of their Greek counterparts. For example, Jupiter was originally god of the sky. Many of their gods and goddesses had to do with agriculture, the main interest of early Romans. Thus Saturn was god of crops; and Venus, goddess of the gardens. From another agricultural deity, CERES, we get our word cereal. Even Mars was god

#### Family life - Homes ②

living room for the whole family. Since it had no chimney for the hearth, its walls were usually blackened by smoke. The chief food was wheat or oat cakes or porridge with some vegetables. Meat was eaten on special occasions, and there were such fruits as apples, pears, plums, grapes, and figs; olive oil was used instead of butter. They drank wine usually mixed with water. Their clothing was of woollen cloth and very simple. The only undergarment worn was a loin cloth.

fairly and strictly, they felt an intense pride in and loyalty to their family and their city. Every Roman was trained to sacrifice his own wishes and feelings for the state without thought of reward. Pain was to be endured without flinching; sobriety was a prime virtue. The most rigid Puritan of 17th cent England could have been no more solemn than the average Roman. His extreme seriousness and strong sense of duty were perhaps partly due to the desperate struggle for existence through which the Romans had passed during the first hundred and fifty years of the Republic.

In no other nation of the ancient world did women hold so high a position, and Roman character and ideals benefited greatly from their steadying influence. At home the wife was absolute mistress, not just a menial confined to a set of woman's apartments as in Greece. "She received her husband's guests and sat at table with them" as an equal. Roman men commonly consulted their wives on matters of business and government as well as on family affairs. She went where

she pleased, her matron's dress assuming her the greatest consideration everywhere - "Men made way for her in the street." She played her part in the public life of Rome and could bear testimony in the courts. The Romans had their MATRONALIA OR MOTHER'S DAY on the first of March, when gifts were made to wives and mothers. The early legends of Rome contain many instances of the heroism of women.

Roman houses of this period were very plain. The main room was a large hall with an open hearth, called the atrium; this was the common

C. 350 B.C.

## ROMAN FAMILY LIFE

Family life was simple and the family bond was extremely close. The children were the companions of their parents and grew up with the idea that their highest duty was to their parents, family, home, and above all to their city. The "PATRIA POTESTAS" was no fiction in early Rome; disobedience was not tolerated - the father could even kill his children without a question being raised. But there is also ample evidence of deeply affectionate relations between parents and children, ruled